

EU initiatives and funding to support sustainable urban mobility

In 2050, approximately 84 % of Europeans will be living in an urban area. A common challenge for all urban areas is to enhance mobility and reduce congestion, accidents and air pollution. The search for appropriate solutions to urban transport challenges has been part of EU policy in various fields for a long time. This paper provides an overview of the EU initiatives and funding opportunities to support sustainable urban mobility in Europe.

Mobility challenges in European urban areas

In 2018, 74.5 % of the European population lived in an urban area and this number is expected to increase to 84 % in 2050. Urban areas drive economic growth, employment, innovation and knowledge production, generating around 85 % of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP), but face multiple challenges arising from a steady increase in urbanisation in the past decades. These include the need to reduce congestion, accidents and air pollution, considered to be the biggest environmental health risk in Europe according to the European Environment Agency. Inefficient and ineffective urban transport not only has environmental and health disadvantages, but also economic costs. According to the [European Commission](#), congestion, which is often found in and around urban areas, costs nearly 1 % of the EU's GDP, amounting to around €100 billion annually. Furthermore, whereas efficient and effective urban transport can contribute significantly to achieving policy objectives in a range of policy domains, including the efficiency of the EU transport system, energy dependency, climate change and socio-economic objectives, success in reaching these policy objectives partly depends on actions taken by national, regional and local authorities, which are usually better placed to find the right responses to such challenges.

EU initiatives

The search for solutions to urban transport challenges has been addressed by EU initiatives for many years. In 2007, the European Commission adopted a [Green Paper on urban mobility](#) to launch a discussion on if and how the EU can add value to actions at local level. This was followed by an [action plan](#) on urban mobility in 2009, including support measures in the field of urban mobility to encourage and help local, regional and national authorities in achieving their goals for sustainable urban mobility. In the 2011 [White Paper](#) on transport, the Commission outlined challenges and objectives to improve competitiveness and resource efficiency in transport, including in the field of urban transport. In 2013, it presented an [urban mobility package](#) reinforcing its supporting measures to develop sustainable urban mobility. Within the package, the Commission also set out the [concept](#) of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP), following a broad exchange between stakeholders and planning experts, supported by Commission initiatives such as the [ELTIS](#) project. SUMP consider the entire functional urban area and envisage cooperation across policy areas, across different levels of government and with the local community. The Commission has been a strong proponent of adoption of this concept by European towns and cities. Over recent years, it has also launched and supported numerous other [initiatives](#), such as the [CIVITAS](#) initiative, and research in the field of sustainable urban mobility.

Urban mobility is also addressed in the context of the [urban agenda of the EU](#), an initiative of EU Member States to foster cooperation in the field of urban policy in close cooperation with the Commission, established in 2016. In the [communication](#) presented in the run-up to help define the scope of the initiative, the Commission highlighted that cities are the location at which a number of global challenges can best be tackled. For example, density of urban areas allows for more energy efficient forms of transport and therefore opportunities for reduction of energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. It also suggested that walking, cycling and public transport are not a sufficiently developed alternative to cars in many cities, resulting in congestion, bad air quality and high energy use. The urban dimension was addressed in the

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[Europe on the Move](#) package presented in three parts in 2017 and 2018. To examine the sustainable urban mobility framework, the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) in September 2019.

The European Parliament has addressed urban mobility a number of times, adopting a [resolution](#) on the urban mobility action plan in 2009 and resolutions on the [urban dimension of EU policies](#) and on [sustainable urban mobility](#) in 2015. In a September 2018 [resolution](#) on the Europe on the Move agenda adopted in 2017, Parliament urged the European Commission and the Member States to promote SUMP.

EU funding opportunities

For the 2014–2020 period, [funding for urban mobility](#) has been allocated through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the Connecting Europe Facility programme (CEF), the Horizon 2020 programme (H2020) and the LIFE programme. For the 2021–2027 period, in the proposed [regulation](#) on the Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund, the Commission intends that funds also be used for development of sustainable multimodal urban mobility. The political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on the proposal for the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) envisages continued support of transport projects in urban nodes of the Trans-European Transport Network, while the proposed [Horizon Europe](#) programme is to continue to fund research and innovation projects in areas such as vehicle design, transport systems and smart mobility. In recent years, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has offered funding opportunities through the [European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI) and the [Safer Transport Platform](#) (STP). The EIB and European Commission have also set up a number of joint initiatives, such as the [ELENA programme](#), which provides assistance for energy efficiency and renewable energy investments targeting buildings and innovative urban transport, and the [Jessica programme](#), which supports sustainable urban development and regeneration through financial engineering mechanisms.

Advisory bodies

The European Committee of the Regions adopted an [opinion](#) on the urban mobility package in 2014 welcoming the European Commission's commitment to the development and promotion of the SUMP concept. It emphasised that urban mobility problems cannot be solved with a sectoral approach, and that account has to be taken of the links between the urban dimension of transport policy and the broader concept of spatial planning. In its 2014 [opinion](#), the European Economic and Social Committee gave its endorsement to the urban mobility package and stressed the importance of continuing programmes that support the development of effective urban mobility, such as the CIVITAS initiative.

Other stakeholders

Among stakeholders responding to the 2019 [public consultation](#) on urban mobility in the EU, [Eurocities](#) calls for strengthened EU support for local authorities, which includes EU support for best-practice sharing, cooperation and greater financial support for implementation. Eurocities also highlights that local urban mobility challenges are characterised by their diversity, require local knowledge and political legitimacy to address in an effective way, and therefore competence on a number of measures should not be removed from national and local level.

Outlook

The [European Green Deal](#), presented at the end of 2019, aims to accelerate the shift towards smart and sustainable mobility. It underlines that automated and connected multimodal mobility and digitalisation will play an increasing role, and aims to support upgrading of the EU transport system and infrastructure to be able to support new mobility services that can reduce congestion and pollution, including in urban areas. The [roadmap](#) annexed to the Green Deal includes a number of initiatives and proposals for the coming years and a new strategy on sustainable and smart mobility to be presented before the end of 2020.

